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STATE FOR ISN ASSISTANT SECRETARY JOHN C ROOD
STATE FOR PM/SNA AMBASSADOR MCDONALD
OSD FOR DASD BRIAN GREEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2017

TAGS: MARR MAS PREL PL
SUBJECT: DEFMIN TELLS REP TURNER THAT POLES AIM TO "BUY"
AIR DEFENSE ASSETS

Classified By: Charge Kenneth M. Hillas for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) While speaking on Missile Defense issues, Defense Minister Aleksander Szczyglo expressed Poland's desire to purchase "modern" air defense missile systems from the U.S. in a meeting with Congressman Michael Turner, member of the HASC, on August 17. Ambassador, DATT and Ministry of Defense Missile Defense expert, Piotr Pacholski, also attended. Szczyglo's additional comments on Afghanistan and Iraq are reported in SEPTEL.

¶2. (C) On Missile Defense, Minister Szczyglo stressed: the importance of the next round of negotiations scheduled for 6-7 September, his keen interest in Congressional budget cuts, and allaying concerns of local residents about the impact of the base. Szczyglo also previewed what his ministry was prepared to do, together with the U.S., to educate the Slupsk community on what the base might look like based on examples from recent trips to Vandenberg Air Force Base. He described the main problem as lack of information, and added that the absence of logical voices to counter the opposition made matters worse. He emphasized that talk of Slupsk as the location for the base is still unofficial and this will not be final until the decision is made to actually place a missile defense base in Poland. Once that decision is made, the Ministry of Defense is ready to work with the United States to resolve local concerns.

¶3. (C) The Minister went on to elaborate Poland's desire to obtain "modern" air defense missile systems. (Note, we understand this to mean Patriots, although senior Polish officials have in the past made reference to future THAAD systems as well.) He emphasized that Poland does not expect to get something for free and is willing to purchase the best possible air defense system. The Minister stated he is sometimes surprised when the United States asks why Poland needs an air defense system like Patriot because the same question is not asked of countries like Germany or Italy. He frankly stated that he thought it improper that an Administration official asked this question. He wanted Congress to know it's necessary for Poland to have a modern air defense system. He underscored that Poland is not looking to get something for free, but is willing to pay the normal price for such a system. He urged the Congressman to help convince the Administration of this need.

HILLAS